A WORD OF FRIENDLY COUNSEL TO YOUNG MEN.

A SERMON

ON THE

DEATH OF GEORGE M. RAMSAUR,

OF NORTH CAROLINA,

DELIVERED IN THE

TENTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,

ON SABBATH EVENING, FEB. 24, 1856.

BY

HENRY A. BOARDMAN, D.D.

PHILADELPHIA:
HAYES & ZELL, PUBLISHERS,
193 MARKET STREET.
1856.

C. SHERMAN & SON, PRINTERS,

19 St. James Street.

CORRESPONDENCE.

PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 26th, 1856.

REV. HENRY A. BOARDMAN, D.D.

DEAR SIR: The undersigned were a portion of the very large congregation who listened to your Sermon on the Death of GEORGE M. RAMSAUR. Believing that it would be a source of consolation to his bereaved relatives, and that its general circulation could not but be attended with good, they respectfully solicit a copy for the purpose of publishing it in pamphlet form.

They also embrace the occasion to return you their cordial thanks for an effort so kind and well directed.

Very truly yours, &c.,

DANIEL M. ZIMMERMAN,
J. S. CUMMINGS,
DAVID FAUST,
R. B. FULENWIDER,
S. C. HAYES,
GEORGE N. ALLEN,
SAMUEL STEVENSON,
DAVID S. WINEBRENER,
GEORGE H. ROBERTS,
R. H. CAMPBELL,
W. L. SPRINGS,
T. ELLWOOD ZELL,
EDWARD T. MOTT,
JESSE LEE,
PETER T. WRIGHT,
A. T. LANE,
ALFRED NESMITH,
JOHN M. WILFONG,
WM. MACK HAYNES,
E. G. ELKINTON,
WM. M. CARTER,
JOHN M. RICHARDSON,
THOMAS SEAGLE,
AUGUSTUS LANDIS,
M. J. MOORE,
D. JACKSON JUSTICE,
CHARLES W. WRIGHT,
S. W. ARNOLD,
FRANCIS SQUIRE.

PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 28th, 1856.

GENTLEMEN:

As the Sermon on the Death of poor RAMSAUR was preached at your special request, I feel that the manuscript properly belongs to you.

The sad event appears to have awakened a great deal of sympathy even in this community, where he was so much a stranger. I shall be happy if my Discourse may serve in any degree to alleviate the sorrow of his afflicted relatives, or to impress upon the YOUNG MEN whom you represent, the affecting lessons of his death.

I am sincerely,
and faithfully yours,
HENRY A. BOARDMAN.

Messrs. D. M. ZIMMERMAN,
J. S. CUMMINGS,
DAVID FAUST,
ALFRED NESMITH, and Others.

SERMON.

"NOW WHEN HE CAME NIGH TO THE GATE OF THE CITY, BEHOLD THERE WAS A DEAD MAN CARRIED OUT, THE ONLY SON OF HIS MOTHER, AND SHE WAS A WIDOW."

LUKE 7 : 12.

On last Wednesday fortnight two gentlemen called upon me to ask me to go and visit a young man, a friend of theirs, about twenty-two years of age, who was dangerously ill. I followed them to his boarding-house. On entering the room, a single glance sufficed to show that the sands of life were ebbing fast, and that the scene must soon be over. His three skilful physicians, one of whom was then with him, felt that the disease was beyond their reach. Indeed, his athletic frame was already racked with convulsive throes, which revealed the presence of the last great enemy; and his excited, terror-stricken countenance disclosed but too well the anxiety which reigned within. It was one of those emergencies in which man is made to feel his utter impotence. There was no place for mere human words even of sympathy. My simple and only mission was to preach to him

"Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." I tried to point him to the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." I reminded him that "even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" that "it was a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief;" that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" and that the Saviour had said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." He assured me of his firm belief of these precious truths, and of all that the Bible contains. He spoke with emotion of his having been reared in the bosom of a Christian family, with the advantages of a religious education. He expressed his sorrow that he had neglected to improve these advantages as he ought, and had put off attending to the concerns of his soul to a dying hour. But, in answer to my inquiries, he replied, that he did now desire to put all his trust in the Redeemer, and that he felt that he *could* and *did* rely upon Him, and commit himself into His hands for salvation. We knelt down around his bed, and commended him to the mercy and grace of God, imploring Him to send the Divine Spirit to renew his heart, and to enable him to trust in that Saviour who had died to take away the sting of death. Other prayers had been offered at his bedside by a Christian friend, who has kindly furnished me with the following memorandum of his interview with him:

"He intimated that he would like to have some

conversation on the subject of religion. At his request, communicated by a friend, I was alone with him for some time in conversation and prayer.

"As I entered the room, he commenced the conversation, with much agitation of mind, by saying, 'I feel that I am a great sinner.' 'O Lord, have mercy upon me!' This last exclamation he made use of several times, both whilst I was speaking to him, and also when in prayer. I encouraged him to believe that if he sincerely repented of the sins of his past life there was peace and pardon for him, and if he felt himself to be a great sinner, there was also a great Saviour provided for him.

"I cited to him, the best way I could, 'the thief on the cross,' the 'prodigal son,' 'the jailer,' and the case of the 'publican' in the temple.

"In answer to a question, he expressed great regret that he had not attended to the subject of religion as a matter of personal concern at an earlier period.

"He spoke of his pious mother with much emphasis and emotion, and appeared to be troubled with the idea of the distress which the intelligence of his death would occasion her."

Both before and after these interviews, he was repeatedly heard pouring out his soul in earnest supplication to God. I returned to him in the afternoon, but he was too far gone to carry on any intelligible conversation. Once more we knelt around him, and prayed that he might be washed in the blood of atone-

ment, and that in this, his hour of extremity, his *Mother's* God might be his God. Shortly after the flickering lamp of life went out.

A day or two elapsed, and a highly respectable company of our merchants and clerks assembled in that house to celebrate his obsequies. He had come here from his home in Lincolnton, North Carolina, only a short time before, to engage in mercantile business. On approaching Baltimore, the steamer was arrested by the ice at a great distance below the city. In walking to the shore, a poor, friendless man fell through the ice into the water. No one seeming to care for him, with characteristic generosity he took off his shawl, and wrapped it around the unfortunate traveller. This exposure, it is believed, laid the foundation of the cold which ultimately terminated his life.

It was no strange thing that the funeral occasion should have been marked by unusual manifestations of sympathy. Every one present felt how sad a thing it was for a young man like him, who seemed to carry health and vigor in every limb and feature, to be cut down with only a week's illness, and, especially, how sorrowful to die *among strangers.* And every one's thoughts were busied with that happy family circle in North Carolina, so unconscious of the scene which was passing here. Eyes unused to weeping were suffused with tears—with tears both for the living and the dead. And many hearts united in the prayer which

commended that bereaved mother and her children to the God of all grace and consolation.

It was a cheerless day when we conveyed his remains to their resting-place. And as the wintry snows fell upon his grave, we thought of the still deeper desolation which must soon spread itself over that stricken household. One consolation we had, as we have still. Although earth cannot heal their wounds, there is "balm in Gilead, and a Physician there." He who has wounded, can heal them. He who has given them this cup of sorrow to drink, can enable them to say, "Thy will be done."

Such was the end of GEORGE RAMSAUR. His personal friends and associates, who had a warm appreciation of his virtues, have requested me to pay some public tribute to his memory. In so far as the request may have contemplated a delineation of his character and life, I cannot comply with it. In the melancholy narration to which you have just listened, you have the entire record of my acquaintance with him; although I am well apprised of the honorable social position, and the moral worth, of the family to which he belonged. But there is another, and better memorial I can rear to him. I can, in some humble way, improve his death for the benefit of the living. This, I am persuaded, is the tribute which, of all others, *he* would desire, were it possible for his spirit to revisit our world: it is certainly the office to which the affecting circumstances of his death point me, with a direct-

ness which cannot be mistaken. Being dead, he yet speaketh; and the one momentous lesson which he urges upon the living, and especially upon the YOUNG MEN in the midst of us, is, that THEY GIVE THEIR INSTANT, EARNEST, PARAMOUNT ATTENTION TO THE SUBJECT OF PERSONAL RELIGION.

It were a curious inquiry, could we, by any process, detect and analyze the emotions which an announcement like this must excite in the breasts of a large assemblage of young men. "Personal Religion!" There must be many here who listen to this phrase with the reverence and the candor which are the natural fruit of a Christian training, and who secretly wish that so great a blessing were their own. To others, again, brought up with fewer advantages, and quite unskilled in even the simpler teachings of the Scriptures, the expression, "Personal Religion," conveys no very intelligible ideas, but merely a vague notion of "being good." While a third class, possibly, tinctured with skeptical doubts, repel any attempt to press the claims of religion upon *them* as a personal matter, with a feeling bordering upon contempt.

We shall not err if we assume that this latter feeling, or something akin to it, is widely prevalent among the young men of our day, particularly those belonging to the educated classes. Their studies have made them familiar with the names of Voltaire, Gibbon, Hume, and other champions of infidelity; or they have listened to the specious objections against the Bible,

forged in the laboratories of modern science; and henceforth, Christianity is to be with them a myth and a fable,—a scheme of faith fit only for women and children. It might be worth while to ask the young men who espouse these opinions with so rare a facility, how far they have *examined* the system on which they venture to pronounce this grave condemnation. *Of course*, in dealing with a volume which claims to be the only written revelation of the Divine will, and, as such, challenges the confidence of every human being, you have refused it your homage only after the most careful and patient investigation. You have read every page of it. You have weighed the arguments in support of its authenticity derived from its style, its originality, the harmony of its several parts, its lofty morality, the matchless character of the personage it presents to us as the Redeemer of the world, its prophecies, its miracles, its triumphs, its consolations, its beneficent effects upon society, and the salutary changes it is still producing before our eyes, in the moral condition of individuals and of nations,—all these arguments you have examined with the frankness and the thoroughness of men intent only upon ascertaining the truth. And having exhausted this ground, you have, in the same spirit, dissected the schemes with which it is proposed to replace the "exploded" system of revelation. You have gone to the Astronomer, the Geologist, the Anatomist, the Ethnologist, and the oracles of infidelity, and asked

them, in succession, with a profound conviction of the solemnity of the inquiry, "If I discard Christianity, what *substitute* can you furnish me? What positive information can *you* give me, concerning the Supreme Being, my own relations and responsibilities as an accountable creature, the destiny which awaits me after death, and the possibility of a reconciliation with that God whom I am *conscious* of having offended?" Of course, you have taken all these precautions before severing yourselves from the common faith of Christendom, and enrolling your names on the long and cheerless catalogue of unbelievers?

Alas, for the integrity and fair dealing of this school of philosophic skepticism. There is, probably, not one in a thousand of them who has ever read the Bible through, or who has explored the wide range of its evidences with an ingenuous, truth-loving spirit. For the most part, they are far more conversant with the attacks upon Christianity than with its "apologies;" credulous in listening to objections, while the refutations of them are unnoticed; eager in embracing the anti-Scriptural deductions of some embryo science, and impatient of the barriers which genuine science and true learning have reared around the ark of the covenant; in a word, anxious at heart to have Christianity proved a fraud, and as disdainful of its requisitions as a man of chivalric principles would be, if asked to stoop to some dishonorable action.

That inquiries prosecuted in this spirit should lead

to infidelity is unavoidable. A similar spirit would defeat its own end in any other science. Medicine, jurisprudence, political economy, all have their sciolists and pretenders, who deal with principles and facts very much in the style which has been described; but they soon find their level. It is only in theology, the noblest of all sciences, that this rank injustice is tolerated. The BIBLE is the only book which the world will permit to be condemned without a hearing.

Not to attempt a vindication of its Divine origin here (which would divert me from the main design of this discourse), it might be well to consider, before you discard the Bible, what you are to get in place of it. Unless you are prepared for the absurdities of pantheism or of annihilation, you must be looking to a conscious, personal existence in another world. *Shut up your Bible, and what do you know of that world?* What do you know of God—of yourself—of retribution—of the possibility of forgiveness? You have a witness within your bosom which tells you that you are a sinner; but what does conscience, or reason, or the light of nature, reveal concerning the pardon of sin and future happiness? Nothing, literally nothing. The insatiate craving of the soul for information on this vital question is met only by guesses and conjectures, baseless, illusive, without authority, and, therefore, without consolation.

I was once sojourning at a watering-place, when there came there an aged man, who had retired from

the bench, and was now a leading politician in a distant state. A mortal disease had laid its inexorable hand upon him, and his friends saw that his days were numbered. They pressed him to see some minister of the Gospel, but he steadfastly refused—refused, I presume, with cursing and oaths, for he was a bitter infidel, and horribly profane. One morning, about four or five o'clock, a servant knocked at my cabin door, and called to me that Judge —— desired to see me. I hastened across the lawn to his room, and the scene which ensued was so appalling that I shall not venture to describe it.

. . . "O sight
Of terror, foul and ugly to behold,
Horrid to think, how horrible to feel!"

Suffice it, that the king of terrors was there with all his hideous retinue. His wretched victim quivered with anguish in his mighty grasp, and seemed already to be anticipating the scorpion-stings of the second death. And thus, after four or five hours of excruciating suffering, his sun went down in midnight darkness. Before we committed his remains to their rude and lonely grave, in a field too desolate for any sepulture but one like this, I made some inquiry of the faithful servant who had waited on him respecting his conversation. He told me—and it is for this incident I have introduced the narrative here—that on the day before his death, as he was alone with him, the

sick man said to him, "*What sort of a world is that to which I am going?*"

Will the young men before me, who may be skeptically inclined, do themselves the justice to ponder this utterance? Here was a man of education and ability, who had served the cause of infidelity for, perhaps, seventy years. And now, as his clay tabernacle is crumbling to ruins, and the immortal spirit is about to be driven forth into another state of being, the irrepressible yearning of his nature triumphs over his towering pride, and he begs a poor African servant to tell him "*what sort of a world that is to which he is going.*" Here, when of all the crises of his life he most needs a guide, his oracle is mute. It has conducted him to those august portals which divide the visible from the invisible world. In another moment, the ponderous gates may open to receive him. And, in helpless amazement and alarm, he cries, "*What is beyond?*" "*What is beyond?*" The earth-born philosophy to which he has confided his all, answers not at all, or answers with a sneer. It has extinguished the light with which Christianity irradiated the scene; and the dim taper it substituted for the Sun of Righteousness, now serves only to make the gloom of eternity more impenetrable.

Why should it be expected to do for a convert like him more than it was able to do for its great high priest, Voltaire? When this prince of scoffers found his end approaching, all his fortitude forsook him.

The gorgeous fabric of unbelief which it had cost the malignant, hypocritical freethinker fourscore years to rear, death pressed with but a single icy finger, and it shrank as Satan did when touched by the spear of Ithuriel. Sending for the Abbe Gauthier, he besought him to administer to him the rites of the Church. His friends never came near him, but to witness their own shame. "Sirs," he said to them, "it is you who have brought me to my present state. Begone; I could have done without you all." He was alternately supplicating and blaspheming God, and crying out, "O Christ!" "O Jesus Christ!" And thus the wretched man expired, a terror to all around him, and an immortal witness to the true value of infidelity in a dying hour.

Other witnesses might be summoned; but I simply invoke these two to admonish you, that before you let go your hold of Christianity, it may be well to consider *what you are to get in the place of it.*

The obvious importance of this topic has led me to enlarge upon it; but there are other lessons more immediately suggested by the sad event we are commemorating. No tinge of skepticism defaced the fair reputation of GEORGE RAMSAUR. His unhappy error lay in postponing to a deathbed, that attention to the demands of religion, which he had acknowledged to be obligatory and needful. And this is, of all others, the mistake against which young men require to be guarded. You purpose to make your peace with God,

and enter upon a religious life, but "not yet." The *intention* is cherished with a tenacity which never wavers: the duty itself is remitted to an uncertain future. Could we pass around this large auditory and propose the question, *seriatim*, to every young man here, "Is it your design to give your personal attention to religion?" with the exception of those who may be imbued with skeptical opinions, the response would probably be a universal affirmative. But were the question added, "Are you willing to begin *now?*" it is doubtful whether we should hear a single prompt and cordial, "Aye."

Various hinderances conspire to produce this result. You are, possibly, pursuing a career of dissipation, which makes you revolt at the idea of repentance and reformation. You are immersed in the cares of business, and, *as you imagine*, have "no time" at present to bestow upon this subject. You are engrossed with academical or professional studies, and it would suit neither your taste nor your convenience to attempt to interweave with them, that serious consideration of the claims of religion which could alone be of any avail. You have, peradventure, a latent apprehension that to "become a Christian," might interfere with plans and hopes which are to lead you on to fame or fortune. Or, you are conscious of a sentiment which you do not care to acknowledge even to yourself, but which is neither more nor less than a *shame* of the Gospel,—a feeling that it is somehow "*unmanly*" to

betray any solicitude about your spiritual well-being.

It would require rather a volume than a sermon, to do justice to the points comprised in this summary, and others affiliated with them. But let two or three considerations be suggested, which lie upon the surface of the subject.

It must occur even to the most superficial thinker, that in assuming the attitude just defined, you are but *poorly requiting the goodness of God towards you.*

I speak to a class of whom it is eminently characteristic, that they abhor meanness and ingratitude. It is both an instinct and a principle with you, to honor everything in human conduct which savors of disinterestedness or magnanimity. There is not a bosom here which did not glow with admiration, when you were told how poor RAMSAUR took off his shawl and wrapped it around the unfortunate stranger who fell through the ice. And had that stranger, after availing himself of this generous kindness, treated his benefactor with selfish apathy and indifference, you would with one accord have cried out against his baseness.

But what has GOD done? and what are *you* doing? I stop not to expatiate on the relations you sustain to Him as your CREATOR and PRESERVER; on the noble gifts with which He has endowed you; on the bounties His munificent hand has showered upon you, from the hour of your birth until now; on the sources of

rational enjoyment He has opened to you, all along the pathway of life; on the motives to gratitude and loyalty, which are interlaced with the entire record of His providential dispensations towards you, down to the present moment: Let all this pass. But turn your eyes to CALVARY. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." "Even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "He bore our sins and carried our sorrows." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

You have heard it whispered, that Christianity was rigorous in its exactions, and that the God of the Bible was a "hard Master." Weigh the full import of these utterances (and the Scriptures are replete with them), and say whether the reproach is deserved. Their "full import," did I say? That were impossible. There are depths here which "the first archangel" could not fathom. But if any spectacle in earth or heaven or hell, could rebuke the unbelief and ingratitude of the human heart, it must be that which the sacred writers describe as the great mystery of godliness, "GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH." This mysterious stranger, who traverses the hills and vales of Judea, attended by a small retinue of fishermen, at whose

word the palsied arm renews its vigor, and the pallid cheek blooms with the glow of health, and the raging waves lie down in unruffled stillness, and the fierce demoniac becomes a little child, and even the monster Death, affrighted, gives back his victims, is no other than the incarnate DEITY. Touched with compassion for our race, he veiled the glories of the Godhead in a mortal form, in order to retrieve the ruins of the apostacy, and replace the crown which had fallen from our heads, and re-establish peace between earth and heaven. The miracles of mercy which embellish the thorny path he is treading; the sublime teachings which fall from His lips; the pure example in which the high requisitions of the moral law are

"Drawn out in living characters:"

these are but *incidents* of his mission—the drapery which enfolds and adorns the grand purpose of his humiliation. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," is his language, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." His errand in our world is *to die*—to die a malefactor's death, as one accursed. His eye is fixed upon the cross. And never does he permit himself for one moment to be diverted from it. There, at length, he consummates his mission, and dies, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. The sins of his people are expiated. The immutable principles of truth and rectitude on which the Divine government reposes, have received a sublime vindication. Death and hell are

vanquished. Life and immortality are brought to light. The Sun of Righteousness arises upon our dark world with healing in his beams. Angelic hosts come down on ministries of grace to the heirs of salvation. Messengers of mercy speed their way from continent to continent, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Through all the abodes of crime, and suffering, and sorrow, there resounds the strange, unwonted invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" The deadly wound of humanity is stanched. The weary and the heavy-laden find rest. Mourners dry their tears. Aliens and outcasts gather around their Father's board. Earth begins to array herself again in the bloom of Eden. Heaven throws wide open its doors to the apostate and the perishing. Around the sapphire throne myriads of ransomed sinners, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, sing that new song, "Unto Him that loved us!" And before time has finished his majestic cycle, other myriads shall go up from our sin-stricken planet, to cast *their* crowns at the Saviour's feet, and to share in that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

To the mediation of Jesus Christ are all these wonders to be ascribed. Forgiveness, and renewal, and salvation are the purchase of his sufferings. It were something could he have tendered them to us by a simple exertion of his sovereignty. But invincible

obstacles forbade this. An atonement was indispensable. And in his boundless love and clemency, he came down and died that we might live. From his *cross* radiates not only every pencil of light which illumines the path to heaven, but that peculiar refulgence which streams through all the aisles of the celestial temples: for even the rapt worshippers in the Holy of Holies are forever reminded of the crucifixion, by the presence in the midst of the throne, of One who appears "as a *Lamb* that had been *slain*."

Surely it would require but the very faintest appreciation of love like this, to enthrone Jesus of Nazareth in every human heart. Were it not that some deep-seated malady blinds them to his glorious perfections, or indisposes them to all fellowship with Him, our YOUNG MEN would be seen hastening to him like the *Magi*, in joyful bands, to lay their honors at his feet, and to enrol themselves among his disciples. You would scorn to treat an earthly benefactor as you treat Him. The withholding of your homage from Him, can be no trivial sin. But this is a small part of the indignity which is heaped upon Him. It were some mitigation of the offence, if the veneration which is denied him, were bestowed upon some worthy object. But what *are* the objects which you permit to rival Him in your esteem, and even to exclude Him from your hearts? Your property, your amusements, your self-indulgences, the gold that perisheth, the plaudits of the populace, the transient mirth that leaves a

sting behind,—nothing is too pitiful or too sordid, to be allowed to arrogate that place in your affections, which belongs to Him alone. Every secular interest must be heeded; every claim of earth recognized; every human benefactor loaded with the spontaneous outpourings of a thankful heart. But when you turn to Calvary, you seem to be no longer susceptible of gratitude. That wondrous spectacle fails to impress you even as a pageant,—still less as a sublime and touching reality. And the spot where, of all others in the universe, it might be supposed the fountains of feeling in your breasts would be broken up, and your souls dissolved in penitential joy, is the very spot where every generous impulse seems to congeal, and the heart itself turns to stone. So appalling is the devastation which sin has wrought in the human soul; and so indispensable that radical transformation of character, of which the Saviour himself has affirmed, "Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

You will not say, there is not one among you who will say, that the Son of God deserves this treatment. It is impossible you should recall the leading events of His life, or review the plan of redemption, without feeling astonished and self-condemned at the ingratitude which has so long rejected Him. Peradventure this conviction may be brought home to your minds with so much vividness at this moment, that you are "almost persuaded" to open your hearts to Him, and

cry with the disciple, "My LORD, and my GOD!" Let me endeavor to invigorate this feeling, by briefly presenting the subject in another of its aspects.

You are standing at the threshold of life. An unknown expanse spreads itself before you, and you are girding yourselves for its conflicts. If you have in any wise the spirit proper to your position and relations, there must be moments of thoughtfulness, when your bosoms are agitated with the question, "*How can I make the most of life?* What acquisitions must I seek, what plans must I adopt, in order to insure the best possible results when I shall come at last to sum up the issues of my life?" A most rational and seasonable inquiry, and one which well deserves your serious consideration.

In answering it, you will doubtless propose to yourselves certain principles and habits as of fundamental importance in *every* sphere of life. Among these, will be integrity, veracity, intelligence, industry, decision, energy, perseverance, kindness of heart, and agreeable manners. If you have in view one of the liberal professions, you will justly assign a conspicuous place to sound learning, sagacity, large powers of analysis and generalization, a ready memory, a facile command of your resources, a generous sympathy with misfortune, and that frankness of manner which inspires respect and confidence. Portraying to yourselves some such equipment as this, you may, not improbably, be looking forward to the distant goals around which your

hopes and aims are clustered. As physicians or lawyers, you would achieve an honorable fame, and inscribe your names among those which have shed lustre on these noble professions. As statesmen, you would serve your country with ability and fidelity, in any sphere to which she might see fit to call you. As merchants, you would seek the ample rewards of commerce, but only through the practice of the commercial virtues. As mechanics, you would emulate the fame of those artisans who have illuminated the mills and workshops of the world with the triumphs of genius, and restored to labor something of that dignity which it had when the primeval man was put into a garden "to dress it and to keep it."

Proceeding a step further, we may now suppose that these several ends will all be accomplished; that by some special arrangement of Divine Providence every individual among you is assured that he will, in the first instance, acquire the personal qualifications he has proposed to himself; and then that by a faithful exercise of these, he will certainly attain the object upon which his heart is set. The wealth, the exalted station, the renown, the well-earned gratitude, the general adulation, all are made sure to you.

Are you satisfied? Does a scheme of life like this, even when its absolute success is guaranteed, commend itself to your sober reason? I look through all this array of graceful accomplishments; I follow you along the thronged thoroughfares which witness and

applaud your triumphs; I see you at length crowned with the civic or the martial wreaths for which you toiled, or glittering with the paraphernalia of pomp and luxury; but nowhere do I detect the presence of a GOD. On every line and lineament of this glowing spectacle—all over the imposing fabric which it has been the one grand achievement of your life to rear—there is the brand of a flagitious *Atheism*. The scheme is one which might have been constructed in a pantheistic universe. It has its entire being—its centre and circumference—in *man*. The moral government of God—human responsibility—redemption—salvation—eternity—these great ideas it does not once recognise. It is a mere earthwork, of loftier pretensions and higher value, it may be, than most earthworks, but still made of the clay we tread upon, and doomed to perish whenever the earth shall be burned up.

Your solution of that profoundly interesting problem, "*How can I make the most of life?*" is fatally wrong in the very first step. You have omitted one element of character, without which angelic powers perpetuated through the endless duration of an angelic life, could neither qualify you for your duties nor confer upon you solid happiness. Until man is brought back into fellowship with his Maker, and the image of God renewed upon his heart, no affluence of gifts can redeem his character from its essential depravity, no splendor of success can satisfy his thirst for happiness.

The principle your characters need—the principle they *must* have, or sink at length, under the pressure of their accumulated corruptions, into hopeless infamy and wo—is *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* Convinced of sin, and penitent for sin, and anxious to be freed from the curse and from the defilement of sin, you must come and cast yourselves upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ as your only hope and refuge. Once united to the Saviour by that Almighty Spirit whose gracious office it is to renew and sanctify the heart, this Divine principle will impregnate your whole characters with its ameliorating influence. It is of the nature of a genuine faith to be a controlling and most beneficent power in the human soul. You require it as a restraint upon your capricious tempers and vagrant passions, and as a counterpoise to the fascinations of sense and the snares of sin. You require it, to harmonize your powers, and clothe you with true dignity of character. You require it, to pierce the veil which separates time from eternity, and disclose to you the relations you sustain to the Supreme Being. You require it, that you may wage a successful warfare with sin, that you may enjoy communion with God, and take hold upon His strength, and grow up into His image. You require it, that you may discharge with wisdom and fidelity the duties proper to your several professions and occupations, and that you may successfully employ your various powers in promoting the glory of God and the good of your fellow-

creatures. You require it, that you may have an adequate solace in affliction, and a sure support in death. You require it, that you may be accepted when you stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and be allowed to enter with the white-robed throng into the holy city.

Here, then, is the true answer to the question, "*How may I make the most of life?*" "BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST." Come with your sins and your wants to the Saviour of the world. Consecrate yourselves to HIM, and you will not live in vain. Trust in his atoning sacrifice, and your dying hours will not be haunted with the dread of falling into the hands of an angry God. Lean upon his everlasting arm, and you will have a FRIEND who will never leave nor forsake you.

What is your decision? Standing here, as it were, around the grave of GEORGE RAMSAUR, I press the question upon your consciences, Will you put your trust in the "FRIEND OF SINNERS," and henceforth own him as your Lord?

As I cast my eyes around this house, I find myself unable to repress the feeling, "What elements of moral power are embosomed in this crowded assemblage of YOUNG MEN?" The buoyancy of youth, the vigor of early manhood, intelligence, indomitable energy, commercial tact, professional ambition, ties of consanguinity and friendship widely reticulated through society,

and the noblest field ever presented for the exercise of such gifts,—what results might not be expected if you should rise up in the strength of Omnipotence, and say, as one man, "Henceforth we live for God and for eternity!" It were not extravagant to assert, that a purpose thus formed in this house to-night, and carried out in a spirit of grateful dependence upon Divine grace, might ultimately tell with a salutary effect upon the spiritual interests of millions of our race in this and other lands.

And why should it *not* be so? Why should you not receive Jesus of Nazareth as your Saviour, and enter *at once* upon that radiant career which you picture to yourselves as so essential a part of your *future* history? Is it possible to suggest a single consideration bearing upon the question of your future repentance, which does not apply, with even a superior urgency, to the present moment? If religion be not all-important, why attend to it at all? If it be all-important, why not attend to it now?

Under no circumstances could you *repay* the infinite debt which the love of Christ has imposed upon you. But you are now in a situation to show that you are not insensible to his kindness. He asks your confidence. He invites your co-operation in that sublime contest he is waging with earth and hell, for the redemption of man from the intolerable servitude of sin.

He enforces this appeal not only by motives drawn from the past—from his incarnation, his example, his

sacrificial death,—but by arguments derived from those glorious rewards of the humble Christian, in comparison with which the noblest professional honors and the brightest of earthly diadems dwindle into insignificance. Is it meet that munificence like this should be requited with the vague promise of *future* gratitude? Will you seek first your own gratification, and *then* the glory of the Redeemer? Will you exhaust your time and your energies in pursuing the transitory distinctions and emoluments of the world, and lay upon his altar only the broken faculties and accumulated sins of a decrepit old age? There cannot be a generous susceptibility of your hearts, which will not revolt at the sordid selfishness of such a policy. There is not an utterance of the law nor of the Gospel which would not brand it with the turpitude of a signal criminality.

It *must* not be so. Yield to the instincts of your better nature. Bow to the dictates of reason and conscience, and return to your allegiance. Be true to yourselves. Dare to be singular (if that be involved in it), and, whatever others may do, put away *your* sins by repentance, and lay hold upon the hope of the Gospel. In demanding your instant, undivided, perpetual homage, God exacts of you only a most reasonable service. To refuse it is to imperil your eternal well-being. To concede it, will be to secure to yourselves every needful blessing in this life, and "GLORY AND HONOR AND IMMORTALITY," beyond the grave.